

## Reading Ethnography

For this assignment, students will research a few key concepts in cultural anthropology and evaluate Internet sources. Then students will read and analyze an ethnography of their choice. The purpose of this assignment is to acquaint students with the fieldwork methods of cultural anthropologists, as well as introduce students to another culture, examine the interaction of cultures and their environments, and practice analytical and written communication skills. Students will also learn to quickly assess web sites as to their suitability for college-level work.

Instructions:

**Part I. Core Anthropological Concepts.** For the first part of the assignment, you will define the following terms: holism, cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, ethnology, and worldview. Using a search engine such as Google (<http://www.google.com>), find at least 2 credible Internet sources so that you may synthesize the definition in your own words. Here is a search tip: search for “anthropology terms” – use the quotation marks.

- YOU CAN USE THE SAME SOURCES FOR ALL OF THE WORDS, but you cannot use your textbooks. **Do not use Wikipedia, other encyclopedias (e.g., Britannica), or dictionaries (e.g., Merriam-Webster).** “Dictionaries” posted by someone at an anthropology department are OK.
- List your 2 sources. Using the CARS rubric (see back of this page), briefly state why you think these are credible sources. Use the following format to cite your web sites:

McKenzie, Barbara A. 2004. Bonampak, Electronic Document, <http://mayaruins.com/bonampak.html>, accessed September 24, 2005.

Note: the first year (2004) refers to the date the document was last updated. Alternately, this date could be the original date it was posted. If there isn't a date, I would recommend that you take that as an indication it is not a credible site and choose another.

**Part II.**

**Finding an Ethnography:** To find an ethnography, go to <http://books.google.com>. Search for any of the titles listed below. Most of these are previews, so you will not be able to read the entire ethnography, but there should be enough information available for you to complete this assignment.

Ethnography of the Cahuilla Indians by A. L. Kroeber  
The Chrysanthemum and the Sword by Ruth Benedict  
Becoming Tongan: An Ethnography of Childhood by Hele Morton  
Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art by Nora Taylor  
Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study by James S. Beilo  
Cows, Kin and Globalization: An Ethnography of Sustainability by Susan Alexandra Crate  
Ethnography of a Nomadic Tribe: A Study of Yanadi by N. Sudhakar Rao  
The Thakali: A Himalayan Ethnography by Michael Vinding  
An Ethnography of Cosmopolitanism in Kingston, Jamaica by Huon Wardle

Please provide the complete citation for the ethnography that you choose to read. Use the Chicago Style format (see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>).

Analyze the ethnography using the questions below. You will be analyzing the book both for the method or approach to fieldwork as well as analyzing a specific trait (behavior) discussed in the book. This will allow you to learn about how anthropological field work is accomplished and about how a behavior is connected to other traits and the natural environment. Don't forget to support your statements using examples from the readings. You may have to read the foreward, preface and/or acknowledgments to answer some of the questions.

We will be using questions from *Core Concepts in Anthropology* (R. Lavenda and E. Schultz, 2006. Boston: McGraw Hill: 237-238) to analyze the ethnography. Address all of the questions. If you cannot determine the answer from your reading explicitly state so. Please provide supporting evidence for your position. You will be typing your answers into a quiz on ANGEL.

- What is the ethnographer's main thesis? What was the purpose of the research?
- How did the author embark on this particular research? How did it come about, who paid for it, etc.

- What is the ethnographer's role? Active participant with a(n) position/agenda or detached observer? What does the ethnographer reveal about their interactions with the people in the study?
- Was the ethnographer an advocate for the people, e.g., working for the people? How did the ethnographer advocate for the people?
- Does the author take any positions about the issues that are raised? Explain.
- What has the author omitted from or not discussed in the ethnography? e.g., Men? Women? Effects of modernization/globalization? Intra-group conflict?
- Are there topics you would like to know more about? Why?
- How did the author exhibit cultural relativism? Were there instances of ethnocentrism?
- Was the author holistic in his or her study of the cultural group? Why or why not?
- Were there elements of ethnology in the ethnography? Describe.
- In brief, what have you learned about the worldview of the people?

*Part III.* Pick one norm highlighted in the ethnography. Address the following questions:

- What is the norm? Make sure that you have not chosen a value.
- Who is involved and what are their roles?
- What societal values are represented in the trait?
- What artifacts are involved? How do the artifacts function?
- How does the norm function in society? (How is the behavior adaptive?)
- How is the norm related to other aspects of the society?
- What commonalities can you find between the experience of the people you've read about and your own life?

#### CARS Internet Site Evaluation Rubric

For more detailed information, please visit <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>

<b>Credibility</b>	trustworthy source, author's credentials, evidence of quality control, known or respected authority, organizational support. Goal: an authoritative source, a source that supplies some good evidence that allows you to trust it.
<b>Accuracy</b>	up to date, factual, detailed, exact, comprehensive, audience and purpose reflect intentions of completeness and accuracy. Goal: a source that is correct today (not yesterday), a source that gives the whole truth.
<b>Reasonableness</b>	fair, balanced, objective, reasoned, no conflict of interest, absence of fallacies or slanted tone. Goal: a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably, concerned with the truth.
<b>Support</b>	listed sources, contact information, available corroboration, claims supported, documentation supplied. Goal: a source that provides convincing evidence for the claims made, a source you can triangulate (find at least two other sources that support it).

Harris, Robert. 2007. Evaluating Internet Research Sources., Electronic Document, <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>, accessed June 19, 2007.

#### Course Outcomes

The following highlighted course outcomes are met by this assignment:

A. Illustrate their communication skills by:

- Using fundamental cultural anthropology terms and concepts in proper context (2.c, 2.d, 4.b)
- Developing or improving both verbal and written communication skills (2.c, 2.d, 4)
- Clearly expressing thoughts about human culture and adaptive processes (2.c, 2.d, 4.b)
- Successfully completing team work both in- and out-of-class (2.c, 2.d, 3)

B. Demonstrate their critical thinking and problem solving skills by:

- i. Recognizing key elements of human culture (2.a, 2.c)
- ii. Analyzing culture at various levels (individual, community, national) and from an anthropological perspective (1.a, 1.b)
- iii. Explaining anthropological theory and its application to human culture (1.a, 1.b)
- iv. Assessing the interaction between culture, biology and the environment (1.a, 1.b)
- v. Identifying cultural traits and determining their function within their cultural context (1.a, 1.b)

C. Illustrate their level of cultural literacy by:

- i. Demonstrating the ability to be culturally relative (1.a, 1.c, 2.a, 2.b)
- ii. Interrelating personal experience and societal forces within the context of cultural anthropology (1.a, 1.b)
- iii. Demonstrating an understanding of why human cultures vary (1.a, 1.b)
- iv. Demonstrating respect for the diversity of human culture (1)

D. Show their level of information literacy by:

- i. Using and evaluating a variety of internet resources (2, 4.c)
- ii. Assessing anthropological information in general and scholarly resources (1.a, 2.a, 4.b, 4.c)
- iii. Using appropriate citation standards for anthropology (4.b, 4.c)
- iv. Exploring how anthropological knowledge is gained by practicing a few of cultural anthropology's methodologies, e.g., real-world observation (2.a, 2.c, 2.d)